

In the Claims

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for conditioning a surface of a polishing pad after chemical-mechanical polishing of a semiconductor substrate with the pad surface, comprising exposing the pad surface to cleaning material that is entirely in the vapor phase, the cleaning material comprising steam.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the steam cleaning material is jetted onto the pad surface to impact the surface with a pressure of from about 10 psig to about 20 psig.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the steam cleaning material has a temperature of at least about 200°F as it impacts the surface.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the steam cleaning material is jetted onto the pad surface from a head which is displaced relative to the pad surface during the exposure of the pad surface to the steam cleaning material.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the pad has a contaminant associated therewith prior to the conditioning, and wherein a chemical agent suitable for reacting with the contaminant is within the steam cleaning material during the exposure of the pad surface to the steam cleaning material.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The method of claim 4-5 wherein the chemical agent includes ammonium is within the steam during the exposure of the pad surface to the steam.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The method of claim 4-6 wherein the chemical agent is ammonium citrate is within the steam during the exposure of the pad surface to the steam.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The method of claim 4-6 wherein the chemical-mechanical polishing utilizes the pad to polish a copper-containing material; and wherein ammonium is within the steam during the exposure of the pad surface to the steam.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the pad is rubbed against a conditioning stone during the exposure to the steam cleaning material.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the pad is rubbed against a conditioning stone prior to the exposure to the steam cleaning material.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the pad is rubbed against a conditioning stone after the exposure to the steam cleaning material.

Claims 12-35 (canceled).